



Smart policies for today's families.

March 6, 2017

Testimony in Support of SB 802: 16 year-old Voter Pre-registration
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Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 802, which would extend the privilege of voter pre-registration to 16 year-olds. Family Forward Oregon supports this concept because it increases accessibility to voter registration and awareness among future voters in all communities.

Oregon has a long history of making ballot access more open, positively affecting civic participation. Beginning in 2007, Oregon began allowing 17 year-olds to pre-register to vote. In 2015, Oregon enacted a bill that automatically sends voter registration cards to those who interact with the DMV through "Motor Voter". Since this program began, 291,938 eligible voters in Oregon have opted to register to vote through Motor Voter¹. This is a huge accomplishment for Oregon. We believe the approximately 20,000 16-year-olds from all over the state who utilize the DMV to obtain their driver's licenses, should be pre-registered to vote. These 20,000 individuals will not have another qualifying interaction with the DMV until they are 24, this limitation could mean thousands of youth are not registered to vote for a number of years after they are eligible

Getting Oregonians engaged in the democratic process from a young age has been shown to help increase voter engagement into adulthood. According to a 2009 study, "Registering the Youth Through Voter Pre-Registration," in 2008 the election in Florida, pre-registered young voters turned out at a rate 4.7 percent higher than their counterparts who registered after age 18.

Ten states and the District of Columbia already allow 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote. Several of those states – including Louisiana, Utah, and Florida – passed those policies with bipartisan support.

Additionally, the roll out of this policy in other states has demonstrated that there is little to no cost to implement voter pre-registration for 16-year-olds. Oregon can easily integrate pre-registration into existing systems for paper and automatic registration, with automatic registration being the most efficient way to collect and process voter registration information.

We believe it is time for Oregon to allow 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote and urge you to vote yes on SB 802.

¹ http://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/OMV/OMV_MonthlyReport_All_January2017.pdf